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Ex-Navy Officer Is Charged With Espionage

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WASHINGTON, May 20 — Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation today arrested a retired United States Navy warrant officer and charged him with espionage, saying he had tried to pass classified documents to unidentified agents of the Soviet Union.

The F.B.I. said the suspect, Chief Warrant Officer John Anthony Walker Jr., retired, of Norfolk, Va., had obtained the documents from his son, Michael Lance Walker, 22 years old, a petty officer assigned to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Nimitz.

The elder Mr. Walker was armed, the F.B.I. said, but did not resist when agents arrested him at 3:30 A.M. in a suburban Washington motel.

A Navy spokesman at the Pentagon, Lieut. Steve Pietropaoli, said that the service could make no comment on the status of Mr. Walker's son, a yeoman third class. The Nimitz began a "routine in-port" call at Haifa, Israel, yesterday, Lt. Pietropaoli said, but he said he did not know whether Yeoman Walker was under arrest.

'Soviet National' Seen

Bill Carter, an F.B.I. spokesman, said agents had followed the elder Mr. Walker Sunday night from a motel in the nearby Maryland suburb of Rockville to a place near Poolesville, Md., in a rural section of Montgomery County. There a large brown plastic bag was tossed from Mr. Walker's car, Mr. Carter said, and the car drove off.

The bureau said it believed that no secret documents were transferred Sunday night. It said that "a Soviet national" was in the rural Maryland area, but it said the agents recovered the bag, which contained some trash and a package of 129 documents.

A Federal prosecutor in Baltimore, where Mr. Walker was held without bond after being arraigned this afternoon, said that with the documents was

a letter apologizing for the "limited quantity" of material.

The prosecutor said the documents, classified "confidential" and "secret," were mostly Navy reports on the movements of Soviet submarines and surface ships.

F.B.I. Head Announces Arrest

The arrest of Mr. Walker, 47, was announced here by William H. Webster, the F.B.I. Director, after Mr. Walker was arraigned.

The Federal complaint filed with the court said that Mr. Walker had "obtained national defense information for passage to the Soviet Union with intent to, or reason to believe that, it is to be used to injure the United States or give advantage to a foreign nation." It said he had obtained the information from Yeoman Walker, "currently assigned

to the U.S.S. Nimitz," which has been operating since March in the Mediterranean.

The complaint described the father-son espionage as "an ongoing clandestine operation." The recovered documents included "copies which appeared to have come from the Nimitz," according to the complaint.

Access to Documents Limited

As a warrant officer, a rank higher than that of an enlisted man but lower than that of a commissioned officer, Mr. Walker would not be expected to have had access to documents of the highest classification. As a yeoman, or ship's clerk, his son's access to highly classified material would have been even more limited.

The espionage investigation was said to be continuing with the cooperation of

the Naval Investigative Service.

If convicted, Mr. Walker could face a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The Federal prosecutor, Assistant United States Attorney Michael Schatzow, said the letter from Mr. Walker that was with the classified documents said: "This delivery consists of material for 'S' and is similar to the previously supplied material. The quantity is limited, unfortunately, due to his operating schedule and the increased security prior to deployment. His ship departed in early March and they operated extensively just prior to deployment."